PEOPLE FOR
THE AMERICAN WAY
Defending Constitutional Liberties

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PEOPLE FOR CONDEMNS RELIGIOUS RIGHT GROUPS FOR MOUNTING "CAMPAIGN OF INTOLERANCE" ON GAY MILITARY BAN

Washington, DC --

People For the American Way today released a report documenting an intensifying Religious Right "campaign of intolerance" on the issue of gays in the military. The People For report condemns this campaign for further polarizing the debate over the ban, and stirring up hatred and resentment.

"The Religious Right is deliberately putting a match to this volatile issue, and counting on a profit from its explosion," said People For the American Way Senior Vice-President John Buchanan. "Time after time, these same groups have attacked civil rights advances, whether for women, African-Americans or gays. But their rhetoric has never been more harsh, their motives more transparent. Their goal is to subvert an important public discussion into a free-for-all based on myths and misperceptions, calculated to divide America."

"This kind of off-the-wall rhetoric must not be allowed to dominate this debate. It will do longterm harm to America," Buchanan said. "It's time for Congress and the public to be informed that there is an orchestrated, extremist campaign afoot to manipulate this issue."

The People For report documents a recent spate of Religious Right diatribes aimed at the military issue on radio, television shows, and in direct mail appeals. These attacks have all the earmarks of an orchestrated campaign designed to whip up public anger. The key players include: **Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Christian Action Network's Martin Mawyer, Focus on the Family's James Dobson, Family Research Council's Gary Bauer, Traditional Values Coalition's Lou Sheldon, Freedom Alliance's Oliver North, and Operation Rescue's Randall Terry.**

People For the American Way is a 300,000-member nonpartisan constitutional liberties organization that works to counter intolerance in American society.

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The Religious Right's Campaign Against Gays in the Military: Fanning the Flames of Intolerance

In the past few weeks, and particularly this past weekend as the difficult issue of discrimination against gays in the military moved into the headlines, the newly revitalized Religious Right movement has geared up its grassroots machine, seeking to create a frenzy of anti-gay activity.

Traditionally, the movement has enjoyed considerable success at such efforts, relying on their far-reaching electronic communications network. This time, the result has been no different, as Religious Right leaders have directed their supporters to flood switchboards on Capitol Hill, the White House and the Pentagon.

The movement's rhetoric on this issue is plainly calculated to divide Americans along the difficult line of equal rights for gays and lesbians. By relying on comparisons to Nazi Germany, appealing to fears of "recruitment of children" by gays, continually reaching out for such hot-button issues as showers and bunkrooms, gay marriages and adoption, and repeatedly suggesting that rescinding the ban would subject servicemen and women to the AIDS virus, the movement appeals to Americans' worst impulses. The result is further polarization on the issue and increased hostility toward gays and lesbians. What was already a difficult issue, has been made more difficult still.

In addition to seeking to ignite a firestorm of protest as a means to accomplish its public policy goals, the movement has its own organizational purposes as well: fundraising and membership. During the last election, the Religious Right identified opposition to gay rights as a highly marketable issue, through successful efforts to adopt a state constitutional amendment in Colorado and to repeal an anti-discrimination statute in Tampa, Florida. Just as significantly, the gay issue helped the Religious Right defeat an Equal Rights Amendment in Iowa. In 1993, the Religious Right continues its emphasis on grassroots organizing with opposition to gay rights their single most potent issue.

The gay issue is also a proven money-maker. For the last two years, anti-gay rhetoric has filled direct-mail letters from Religious Right leaders, even, by some estimations, supplanting opposition to abortion as a favored direct-mail issue.

Although the question at hand has no doubt spawned a considerable amount of spontaneous controversy, the Religious Right, as it so often has done in the past, has fanned the flames, appealing for grassroots action, while soliciting funding as well.

Following are some recent examples of Religious Right organizing around the issue.

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- Televangelist **Jerry Falwell** took to the airwaves this past weekend and blasted Clinton for his efforts to overturn the ban. On his nationally syndicated "Old Time Gospel Hour," Falwell said:

> "Today you cannot turn on a television or read a magazine -- a newspaper -- without being bombarded by the new, radical homosexual rights agenda, which threatens to turn this nation into a modern day Sodom and Gomorrah. Even our new president, Bill Clinton, is considering the passage of a gay civil rights bill through Congress -- he's promised to sign it -- and it's the most radical such legislation this nation has ever seen.
>
> It will establish homosexuality as a bona fide minority, like blacks, Hispanics, women, and so forth. It will mandate that homosexuals be hired as a quota. Beyond that bill, he has promised to lift the ban which prohibits gays in the military. Imagine legislation that would include hiring quotas for churches. Out of the question? I don't know about that. What about legislation that provides legal marriage status for homosexuals, which then would permit homosexuals to adopt children legally in all 50 states. This gay civil rights legislation could also penalize pastors ultimately and all ministers for preaching against homosexuality from a Biblical perspective as sin. It could be called hate-preaching, hate-speaking. All of this right now is on the agenda of the radical gay population...
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> "There's a very deep concern among prominent Biblical scholars in our society that America may be on the verge of self-destructing, as did the Roman empire, the Grecian empire -- as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah -- there comes a time when God will no longer turn his face and the wrath of God falls upon a society...When you hear the president of the United States saying 'I will promote passage of a new federal gay rights legislation law through the Congress and I will sign it,' which will establish homosexuality as a bona fide minority, we have reason in America to be frightened, because for the first time in 217 years of history we put America under the wrath of God."

Falwell's message concluded with a call for viewers to call a "900" telephone number (complete with a per minute charge) to sign onto a petition urging the president not to reverse the ban.

- On the January 21, 1993 "700 Club," televangelist **Pat Robertson** compared homosexuality to Nazism:

"When lawlessness is abroad in the land, the same thing will happen here that happened in Nazi Germany. Many of those people involved in Adolf Hitler [sic] were Satanists, many of them were homosexuals -- the two things seem to go together. There were deviant sexual practices, all kinds of orgies taking place -- you can read some of the stories about what Herman Goring used to do, what Hitler used to do, others. There was a large coterie of occult right at the heart of the Nazi movement. You can see the same thing here....

"What the president said yesterday was a very good word: 'what's bad in America can be fixed by what's good in America.' Well, that's true. There's more good than there is evil. But let's not give preferred status to the evil while we're at it. Let's give preferred status to the good.

- **Focus on the Family**'s (FOF) January 25 radio program, heard on more than 1,000 stations across the country, began with a conversation between FOF leader **James Dobson** and **Family Research Council** leader **Gary Bauer.** In that conversation, Bauer renewed his challenge to the President's initiative:

> This is a tremendous change that the new president is signalling that he is going to make. It has incredible implications and in spite of all the advice he's getting to the contrary, he seems intent on going through with that promise.... Will the male friends and female friends of homosexual members of the military be entitled to dependent rights? Will there be homosexual clubs on military bases? What does this have to say about recruitment?

The segment ended with an appeal to listeners to write and call the President and Members of Congress and urge the ban's retention. The appropriate phone numbers were then read over the air.

- In a January 8 "Priority Alert" direct-mail letter, **Freedom Alliance** leader **Oliver North** writes that

> "Clinton has cut a deal with his fanatical friends and now plans to make lifting the restrictions on homosexuals in the military a top priority.
>
> "The issue is whether radical homosexuals -- or anyone else for that matter -- have a 'right' to serve in our military when their conduct could cost American lives.... In a military barracks, totally private living accommodations are nonexistent.... I know, I've spent years in the Fleet Marine Force.

"There is also an important health consideration here that simply cannot be ignored. In order to be effective, military training must replicate the harsh realities of combat. Injuries, open cuts and bruises are not unusual -- creating conditions under which personnel undergoing training would come in contact with blood and other bodily fluids from their injured comrades. With people dying on the battlefield of wounds sustained in combat, we cannot afford to increase the risk of AIDS, hepatitis and other diseases which are prevalent in the homosexual community....

"If we can build enough public pressure, [Clinton] *will* back down. But this will only happen if you and I literally 'flood' the White House with petitions and letters from Americans across the country in opposition to lifting the restrictions on homosexuals in the military.

North goes on to ask members for a "special contribution" to cover the "enormous costs associated with this kind of a massive national campaign." North closes the letter with his traditional "Semper Fidelis" closing.

- Appearing on **Paul Weyrich**'s satellite television network (National Empowerment Television) on January 19, the **Reverend Lou Sheldon** of the fervently anti-gay **Traditional Values Coalition** picked up the theme as well. NET is privately broadcast to organizations in 91 congressional districts. Sheldon said:

"What's at stake is that the president is about ready to become -- as George Bush wanted to be the 'education president' with his educational initiatives -- Clinton, I think, will go down in history as the 'homosexual president' with his homosexual initiatives.

"What we can do, I think [is] very simple... Legislation will be introduced. We do not know who's going to be carrying it at this time, but I think it's important that those who are listening write their congressmen....

"We need to make some noise, and we need to make some noise in terms of the Senate. We need to encourage Congress..."

Subsequently on the program, Michael Schwartz of Weyrich's Free Congress Foundation said that "If we lift the ban on homosexuals and, in effect, turn the armed forces into a haven for open homosexuals, what we will do is destroy the defense capability of this nation." Schwartz, too, urged viewers to contact their Members of Congress on the matter.

- In a November direct-mail letter, **Sheldon** charged that a repeal of the ban would put America "on the brink of a national security disaster." He continued:

> "Forcing the military to accept homosexuals will destroy the necessary elements for an adequately prepared armed forces.
>
> "Unit cohesion is essential for any fighting force. In daily military life or combat where men depend upon each other for their very lives as members of a mutually supportive fighting team, there must be trust, confidence and mutual respect.
>
> "Health is a vital issue especially since homosexuals poise [sic] a threat to the overall unit blood supply because of AIDS and other potentially fatal or disabling sexually transmitted infectious diseases.
>
> "Morale makes the difference between winning or losing, and in combat between life and death. Freedom, liberty and independence from hostile foreign nations are values we cannot squander away at the altar of 'political correctness.'"
>
> "Forcing the military to accept homosexuals and lesbians will chip away at these foundations which hold up our military, thus causing a national security disaster."

Sheldon goes on to urge followers to call their Members of Congress (providing the phone number) and to lobby President Clinton.

- Reverend Sheldon's **Traditional Values Coalition** sent a November fundraising letter calling on supporters to lobby President-Elect Clinton to abandon his stance. "If patriotic Americans act quickly," he wrote, "we have a good chance at stopping radical homosexuals from severely damaging our armed forces."

  Appealing for donations, Sheldon writes, "together we can make financial sacrifices to keep America's military straight and upright.

- **Operation Rescue** (OR), until recently a group that focused almost exclusively on denying women their fundamental reproductive rights, has added the gays-in-the-military issue to its agenda. Earlier this month, the group organized a protest rally around the issue in Colorado Springs, Colorado. According to local media, Operation Rescue sought to conceal its sponsorship of the event by putting out press materials describing two American Legion posts and a veterans group as the sponsors.

The local American Legion commander, however, was quoted saying, "somebody made a mistake." His organization had been contacted and specifically declined to sponsor the event, he explained. When contacted by the media, local OR leaders acknowledged that they had been asked by national OR leaders to contact local veterans groups without identifying their OR affiliations.

In a December 8, 1992 letter, **Randall Terry**, urged followers to take part in what he described as a series of "Just Say No" demonstrations against gays in the military. "Clinton is promising to further defile our land," he wrote, "further attack the family, to further spurn God's commands," if he lifts the ban.

- Press reports indicate that a videotape used by the **Oregon Citizens Alliance** to promote that state's anti-gay initiative in November's elections, has now begun circulating in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill. Produced by a group called "**The Report**," the 20-minute video, "The Gay Agenda," plays on a variety of anti-gay hot buttons. It seeks to define all gays and lesbians by the most extreme elements of the community; exploits fears of gay "recruitment" of children in the schools; and presents so-called psychological experts who discuss efforts to "cure" homosexuals.

- The **Christian Action Network**, best known for its inflammatory anti-gay attack ad aimed at then-candidate Bill Clinton last fall, is promising to produce and air a new ad on the gay-ban issue. The ad, says CAN President **Martin Mawyer**, would urge Americans to contact their elected representatives in support of the ban.

- In a series of early January ads in Norfolk, Virginia newspapers, **Gary Bauer**'s **Family Research Council** tried to reach the considerable local military community by arguing that "Every good soldier knows you don't march through a minefield!" The ad asserts that gay-rights groups are pressuring Clinton to permit "open homosexuality" in the military. The ad urged readers to contact then President-Elect Clinton to urge him to reconsider his position.

In a mid-December newsletter, Bauer sowed the seeds of controversy, writing:

> "President-Elect Clinton's plan to recruit homosexuals for the military is hurtling ahead. Lifting the military ban is a chief demand of radical homosexuals. They will force re-education programs on the military.... If they win, gay militants will turn on the civilian sector demanding the right to marry, to adopt and to teach homosexuality in schools. They will bully groups like the Boy Scouts into accepting homosexual men as role models for young boys.
>
> "Without the ban, America's young service men and women will be forced by law to share barracks and showers with homosexuals. Recruitment of young men and women for our All-Volunteer Force will suffer. This could open the

door to a draft -- a dread possibility for an untested commander-in-chief who himself declined to serve....

"Military families with children could face living next to openly homosexual couples in base "family" housing, and would have to compete with homosexuals for already overburdened medical services."

The article urges FRC followers and their friends to write to the President, their U.S. Senators, and their U.S. Representatives. It urges readers to write their state governors (because they are commanders-in-chief of the state National Guard), state legislators, the National Guard Adjutant General. The article also urges readers to contribute money to FRC to support its anti-gay efforts.

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People For the American Way is a 300,000-member, nonpartisan constitutional liberties organization. For more copies of original source materials, or to arrange interviews, contact the People For Communications Department at 202/467-4999.

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